









IN PRAISE OF LEAVES  
AND OTHER VERSE



# IN PRAISE OF LEAVES

## AND OTHER VERSE

BY

LILIAN SHUMAN DREYFUS

*(Lilian Gertrude Shuman)*

"And then there crept  
A little noiseless noise among the leaves  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves."  
— KEATS.



BOSTON  
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

Published, November, 1906.

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IN PRAISE OF LEAVES.

Norwood Press  
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.  
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.



PS  
3507  
D826i

To my Mother

HETTIE LANG SHUMAN

Stumbling, we see the future as a cup  
Which she no longer stores with bread and wine,  
And where our human longing, yours and mine,  
Is all the incense we may offer up.

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# THE LEAVES





# I

## IN PRAISE OF LEAVES

WITH open palms held shyly to the sky,  
Like acolytes that tremble as they vow,  
The frail leaves waver on the tranquil bough.  
The hush that hails the dusk, itself a sigh,  
Presses the trees, too startled to reply.  
The slender shadows of the spring are fled,  
And summer's slumbrous masses, in their stead,  
Linger beneath the nestling's lullaby.  
O you, brave harbingers of bridal Junes,  
Most patient Leaves, whose charm is selfless grace,  
What dower hovers in your lisping runes  
That thus you dare so near the heaven's face?  
What lovers lorn, O craving Leaves, are you,  
The thankless clouds eternally to woo?

## II

### THE VICTOR'S CROWN

WITHIN the tree-tops, fearfully and still,  
The Victor's crown is woven; leaf on leaf  
Night's windy fingers ply their purpose brief.  
Shaped with unerring craft, the branches thrill  
With prophecies the centuries fulfil,  
Faint voices severed from their vernal souls.  
What aspirant lurks here, whom triumph doles  
A trophy which the foundling breezes will?  
What one is he the wilderness doth guide,  
Baring, with lure of Bay, its thicket door?  
Hath he a hope to breast the rustling tide  
Surging and breaking on a spaceless shore?  
Or is he led, enslaved by wishes deep,  
A Victor, vanquished, to his empty sleep?

### III

#### THE SUPPLICANT

**L**O, it is he! his eyes like stars agleam,  
His parted lips that droop with memories  
muted,  
His yearning hands that clasp the sacred lute.  
From out the clamorous dark, with steps that seem  
To follow, ever hope-impaled, a beam  
Pursuant, on he presses, snared in gloom.  
Upon his brow the laurel's verdant doom  
Rests like the fadeless pinions of a dream.  
With haunting litanies the air awakes,  
Vibrant with tones whose rapture is a pain,  
The paling branches part, where hesitates  
A shadow, backward gazing once again :  
Still backward gazing, Orpheus heart, to meet  
Eternity within a moment fleet.

## IV

### POSSESSION

OH art thou he, whose voice is melody,  
Whose soul is as a harp the eve-winds stir,  
Until its song shall reach the soul of Her ?  
Oh art thou he, whose whole desire must be  
For ever sealed within an alien sea,  
That leafy sea, where thou hast all forgot,  
Save that thou lingerest yet where She is not ?  
Oh, Orpheus, calling still Eurydice !  
There art thou prisoned 'mid the tossing waves .  
Of spindrift green, engulfing thee apart,  
There must thou bide ; no Lesbos lulls thy staves,  
Or quenches night's wild longing in thy heart ;  
Thou whose wide gaze did pierce the Stygian mist,  
Supreme possessor, who in loss . . . yet kissed !

## RECOGNITION

I LEFT the toilsome streets and fared  
Unto the world of trees,  
The faces of men's windows glared  
With sunset's smouldering ease.

Beyond the elbowed throngs I came  
Unto a world of sky,  
I found no voice there raised to blame,  
Or my bound day decry.

Beneath the gloaming of a pine  
I rested, knowing then  
What greater loneliness was mine  
Within that world of men.

## KITH

WITHIN the forest's close embrace,  
My soul its kinsfolk met,  
Tall pines, with strings that interlace,  
The winds might tune and fret.

The larches turned their breasts to me,  
Each homeward beckoning,  
Their midmost, primal mystery  
Beyond my reckoning.

Then to that parent-house I crept,  
While Silence counselled near,  
And in the cup my heart had kept,  
For welcome dropped a tear.

## FOREST SOUND

I HEARD the twilight sounds that slip  
Within the awe-hushed wood,  
The sudden call of bird, the trip  
Of insect hardihood.

I saw the poplar trees that glowed  
Within their tawny barks,  
Each tinkling leaf, a bell that showed  
A tongue of silver sparks.

I felt upon my cheek the whirl  
Of free, mysterious life,  
The half-hid wings of things that stir  
An unguessed soul to strife.

The breath of waters followed me,  
Like quickened sighs at night,  
Where little winds made minstrelsy  
'Gainst boughs of frail delight.

About me pressed, how unaware,  
The woodland's spirit-cry,  
Till driven from that Eden there  
A forest-voice roam I!

## FOREST SHADE

COLOR and shade slip hand in hand  
Within the forest deeps,  
Where cradled 'neath each sunny strand,  
A shadow lightly sleeps.

The maiden birches know a way  
To gather veils of white,  
Which gleaming o'er them through the day,  
Are beacons lit at night.

The grounded ferns are wise with lore  
Of pigments wrought of gems,  
That glow like thin, transparent ore,  
Upon their slender stems.

The darkness winds a substance pale  
About the tree-trunks' girth,  
And chains the lichens, gray as hail,  
Unto the eboned earth.

The roots of lavender and brown  
Enwreath the tree-gnomes' urns,  
While man, whose graves are in the town,  
To tired memory turns.



## CHALLENGE

THE aspen fauns their clappers took  
All made of leaves like blades,  
And on the breeze the quick notes shock  
Unto the Dryad glades.

The hemlocks heard the challenge tossed  
Across the pagan waste,  
And with their verdant fingers crossed  
Their trembling breasts in haste.

The white pines each a taper swung  
That lit June's christening,  
High where the shadow-pastures hung  
Like incense glistening.

The mist hills, blue with heavens flushed,  
Brooded like early morn ;  
Their quiet voice the clamor hushed  
Human with symbols lorn.

Still 'neath those silenced mountains wage  
Fresh challenge and pursuit —  
Perchance man may, with lesser gage,  
His soul to leaves transmute.

## IN PASSING

PASSING, I heard the cricket's wail  
Cleft by the voice of leaves,  
Leaves, whose bare cheeks on mine, like hail,  
The wind-spray hurtling, heaves.

Passing, I saw the grasses weighed  
With mists of memoried things,  
Things, whose far flight upon me laid,  
The shadow of their wings.

## APPARITION

THROUGH the blue distance loom the laden  
heights,  
Changeless 'mid lives of men that come and go,  
With dwindling outlines where the cloud-blooms  
blow,  
Inured to time they fend the valley's rights.  
Crowding the water's edge, the laughing flights  
Of grass-weed bend, and crested pine-waves rise  
And fall, sighing their praises to the skies.  
Now is it night, bound earthward with delights  
Of all the secret, solitary things  
Which Nature in her holy scrip doth bind, —  
Close darkness, and the sleeper's wind that sings,  
A shadow-moon with giant trees entwined,  
Some startled soul, in corporate wonder pent,  
Spying the vision from himself outsent.

## LAKE MEADOWS

WHERE waters, by some Merlin charm em-  
pearled,

Until their silence inundates the world,  
Shape the stern rocks, and mould them to their  
end,

Forging of ages, tools that grind and bend,

I sit and watch the silver-flowered moon,  
Swift fleeing in her cloud-bedraggled shoon,  
A solitary star upon her brow,  
Like genius, burdened with its novice-vow.

A bird slips suddenly, his trail  
Cleaving a shadow's lonely sail,  
Where beaten meadows of the lake flow clear,  
Sown with a rippling harvest far and near.

## THE LINGERING PAN

THE haunted woodland is awake  
With memories of a lingering Pan,  
Here last, beside the trembling brake,  
He rested, when the night began.

His syrinx broken lies beyond,  
A stifled heart-cry mute within,  
No mocking Echo may respond  
To notes tossed wildly, shrill and thin.

By pines, that severed like a shell,  
Still murmur of dim seas, long lost,  
My soul and I sit, 'neath a spell,  
And watch the tangled tree-tops  
crossed.

We may not stir, nor sleep, nor sing,  
But gaze entranced on waters clear,  
Where, mirrored with a broken wing,  
We see our imaged selves draw near.

Will he not come, the laughing god,  
And free us from immortal ties,  
Since we, small-fashioned of the sod,  
Must worship with earth's measured eyes?

Alas, thou Pan of glen and tree,  
Weird minstrel of a windy gleam,  
Though wistful, thus we chance on thee,  
Thou leav'st us pinioned in our dream.

## WINGS

THE heart-wings in me woke and stirred,  
Within the forest night,  
They stirred like little leaves half heard  
'Twixt pauses in their flight.

“Be quiet, restless heart,” I said,  
As working hours crept,  
“Art thou still mourner of thy dead?  
Long thou hast served and wept!”

Oh heart-wings, wilt thou folded be?  
For keen are dawn's sad eyes,  
And day must not the far wings see,  
Night's cloister hours surprise.

## TRYST

GENTLY the amber twilight lifts her wings  
And drifts away into a world of gray,  
Trackless her path, save where the tottering day  
With hands despairing to her vesture clings,  
Until in pity one last look she flings !  
Now hath each russet cloud, pursuing, fled,  
And night's first wind-song, beating wild, hath  
    sped  
Beyond the urgency of mortal things.  
Like running rivers made of molten wax  
Which stiffen into barren grooves of age,  
Unfathomed lie the moon-trails, long and lax,  
Upon a sky where unlit stars presage.  
Lo, stand we here with hearts that still persist,  
While youth's blind shadows hold forgotten tryst.



## REVOCATION

THE loud day hath his earthly vesture shed,  
And wide beyond our seeming chance hath  
fled ;

The twilight hath her gleaming hair unbound,  
And wrapped within its shadows every sound.

Beyond the darkened drift of green-bowed leas,  
The dim sails trail upon horizoned seas,  
And while the cricket, born in bondage, sings,  
My vagrant soul would spread Icarian wings.

## AFTER RAIN

O H, make not count of joys the city holds  
Within its maundering, capricious folds —  
The joys the weary may attain are brief  
As closed within the rondeau of a leaf.

In city coverts for the anxious hire,  
Await the joys the joyous may desire —  
What balm of Gilead may the weary gain  
Like scent of country meadows after rain?

## AUTUMN WIND

THE wind awoke, and with his stealthy hands,  
He grasped the tree-limbs in a mighty hold;  
He swayed the branches in their tented fold,  
And forced them, sighing, to his vassal bands;  
He stole among the leaves with shrill commands  
And tore their clinging cradles as they slept;  
He heeded not earth's children as they wept,  
Nor recked he, creedless, Nature's terse demands  
For when with tardy haste he turned to soar,  
The branches wove a net, and bound him there,  
Which, as he struggled, ever tangled more,  
Until at last his breathless heart lay bare.  
Upon the verdant hillside now there looms  
A scarlet feather torn from sanguined plumes.



“SHORT SWALLOW-FLIGHTS  
OF SONG”



## AMBUSH

THERE is a little bird that wings  
Across my crystal hour of morn,  
A termless undertone he sings,  
Muffled, and purposeless, and worn.

And listening now, it seems to me,  
My heart is as that little bird,  
Wayfaring in captivity,  
With burden of a song unheard.

## INTANGIBLE

I KNOW a sound, so quiet, still,  
It seemeth echo more than sound,  
Its curious, hushed insistency,  
Lureth, like waters, winter-bound.

I know a light, so lambent, frail,  
It scarcely seemeth light to me,  
Fringed with a dwindling afterglow,  
A saint's pale halo it might be.

I know a touch of pain, so vague,  
It seemeth like a shadow-thing,  
Beyond some outer reach of mine,  
It lingereth, furtive, hungering.



## THE STAFF

I LEFT him where the roadways verge,  
The friend whose silences were speech,  
(We did not speak because the surge  
Of silence drowned the words in each.)

I did not turn, but in the calm  
I knew he waited there for me,  
And that his touch upon my palm  
A pilgrim's staff had grown to be.

## THE QUIET ROOM

WITHIN the quiet room there is no strife,  
Its still, cool walls bar in unfathomed life;  
I cannot hear the boom where the dread tide  
Of human breakers beats the farther side.

Within the quiet room there is no sign  
Of tables spread to feed this soul of mine,  
But while grim hunger crouches, like a beast,  
I sit me down to silence as a feast.

## SALVAGE

HE took the flowers that Love gave,  
    (Such pity in her eyes ! )  
He doubted not their balm might save  
    His soul's most dark emprise.

He thought Love's radiant hands had made  
    The garden whence they grew,  
He did not know that Love may trade  
    Her petals wet with dew.

## FULFILMENT

**H**E said, "Enough if Life but give,  
Bread, and the worker's sleep,  
And space for little joys to live,  
Content my heart shall keep."

Life gave, but hungry-hearted, he,  
Now waits, unmemoried, fed :  
Knowing, that answered verily,  
Life gave him stones for bread.

## RENUNCIATION

WITH monkish rite and dirge  
She sought her soul to purge,  
Yet found but spectral rest,  
In her unquiet breast.

Now like a shadow seed,  
Passive 'neath winter need,  
Incurious seasons roll  
Above her silent soul.

## RETREAT

WITH fervid heart he trod  
Appointed ways to God,  
Yet found he but the lone  
Man-idol carved of stone.

Now with unhasting feet,  
Treads he to sure retreat,  
Where vernal altars lurk,  
Reared to the Goddess, Work.

## TWILIGHT LAND

I KNOW a land where silence dwells,  
And mysteries of sound are still,  
And in that land all colors merge,  
Outvoicing silence like a thrill.

And since I know no other name,  
I call it Twilight Land, and say,  
Perchance my soul had strayed therein  
Before it found its human way.

## THE OLD HOUSE

CALMLY it waits — nor earth's indifferent face,  
Nor time, the pensioner, nor laws' disgrace,  
Shall its self-sanctioned isolation trace,  
Or serve its unwreathed hearthstone to debase.

What shadows hold your rooms and corridors,  
Old House? What dreams walk your enfranchised  
floors?

What little words, where now your silence soars?  
And shall men boast tribunal masked as yours?



## REMEMBERED

**H**E asked me if the dream was happiness,  
(His words are in my heart as in a nest),  
And I, who am afraid of joy, I said :  
“ I do not know. I only thought it rest.”

## SEA-TURN

I LEFT a friend, but when I came again,  
I found a stranger, clad in friendly guise ;  
So on a summer night, the instant rain  
Treads on the sea-turn, faced with sharp surmise.

I left a shepherd, tending flocks of thoughts,  
I found a judge who sheared them till they bled ;  
What sudden turn of chance, what spur exhorts  
This alien hither — drawn where famine led ?

“SINCE WORDS ARE ONLY  
WORDS”



## FOOTPRINTS LIKE MEMORIES

A LONG the roadway fare I, where the grass  
Bows 'neath the dust-yoked winds of every-  
day.

Wayfarer I, knowing the birds that stray  
Like wander-souls across night's shadow-glass.  
Immutable the laws whereby I pass  
Ever upon the road the lonely know,  
Nor may I follow filmy tracks that show  
Footprints like memories which the years amass.  
"Footprints like memories," said I, for they lead  
Unto the neighbor paths that vein the world,  
Separate the ways, yet with divergent speed  
Of courses preordained, they touch, are furled,  
And part again — their goals a dwindling maze,  
Where Life, a famished Israel, may but gaze.

## TO A FRIEND

MY Friend, who ever through firm years has  
seemed

Dowered beyond wish with human work to do,  
How is it my blind heart had never dreamed  
That you, home-souled as I, were lonely too ?

In silences uncomforted are caught  
Those healing hands forever spent anew,  
Hands whose attainment all too dearly bought,  
Discoverers are that you are lonely too !

To-day I found you crowned with blessed toil,  
Tolerant 'mid praises — I, the lowly, knew ! —  
How came it, Friend, through patient years' recoil,  
Only to-day I knew you lonely too ?

## THE DREAM-GATHERER

I GATHERED all my dreams, till one by one,  
They lay like flowers trembling in their  
sheaves,

I who did build a garden, hardly won  
From sterile silence, unreclaimed of leaves.

I gathered all my dreams, and placed them where  
Their fragrance might await me in the Dark,  
Nor wonderingly I grope to shelter there  
Led through the distance by some latent lark.

I gathered all my dreams, till now they seem  
To be the granary wherefrom I knead  
My daily bread (the garden's seedling dream),  
My daily bread more real than living deed.

*"To every man there come noble thoughts, that pass across his heart like great white birds."* — MAETERLINCK.

THE great white birds of thought, how close,  
yet fleet,  
They loose their pinions o'er the restless day,  
And while the heart of man plods on its way,  
Unseen they flock with tidings nobly sweet.  
Humble, and oft unwelcomed, do they greet  
The orphaned present with a kindred past,  
While sudden memory starts to face at last  
Beauty unrecognized by its near beat.  
But oh, the birds with sunset on their wings,  
That cross the heart of man with furtive cries,  
Casting a shadow of unbidden things,  
Blenched as the portent-moon in sea-bound skies,  
What thoughts are these, whose noiseless plumes  
alight,  
Spurring man's silent soul, and lost in night?



*"Does the soul only flower on nights of storm?"*

— MAETERLINCK.

IS it on stormy birthnights then, alone,  
The soul may flower, large with blossoms tense,  
With dews whose poignant, ominous incense  
Fosters the shapeless deed 'mid carnage sown?  
Is it, then, solely when the world has grown  
Pygmy, before some I, but now aware  
Of its soul vision, hitherto so fair,  
Cast forth at last while rain and wind make moan?  
What of the toiler's unrecorded days,  
Unbourgeoned nights of stars, and hours still-born?  
What of the youthless — they whose arid bays  
Earth's image-breakers fit to brows forsworn?  
What if untended, dwarfed 'neath commonplace,  
The soul should blossom petalled thrice in grace?

## ALTERNATIVE

THE aftermath of failure? who would choose  
'Twixt deeds that festival remembrance lose,  
The dreary wisdom of the day slipped by,  
And life outpeering with a stranger eye?

The Victory of failure? who may tell  
Of final peace where strivings sleeping dwell,  
Shall triumph or defeat, denuded, win,  
At the barred doors "where no hope enters in"?

## APOSTASY

L ORD, grant me, said I, conscious life to  
live,

Days memorable with vital tasks to do,  
Bare me the face of fact, and lead me through  
The thrusts that verity doth take and give.  
Out in the world where motives war and shrive,  
Teach me to pierce the finely tissued mesh  
That veils illusion 'twixt the soul and flesh;  
Man's signal thought reveal — my need forgive!  
So said I, Lord, who now my prayer revoke,  
Begging instead, the grails that come not true,  
The simple heart of faith, the quiet yoke  
Of shadows distant as their rootless rue.  
Yield me unquickened vision now to see  
Within my untried dreams, reality.

## LITANY

GIVE me thy shadows, youth,  
O beautiful — and dim !  
See, with thy laurelled truth,  
My needy brows I trim !

Thy shadows, grant, and dreams,  
O manifold — and frail !  
Now with Promethean gleams  
I come thy Light to hail !

Thy dreams, the changelings,  
O radiant — and wist !  
They slumber 'neath their wings  
Night-folded in their mist !

O youth, thy shadowed star,  
Thy dream-illumined face,  
Now I, begirt, afar,  
Uncomforted, retrace !

## MY LITTLE MOTHER

**M**Y little Mother — you from whom I took  
My daily blessings thoughtless of their  
source,

My yearly service witless of its force,  
What days on days must clamorous silence brook  
This peopled presence without voice or look?  
My little Mother, now you answer not,  
Wondering, I catch your quick response, forgot  
Amid the lax assurance habit took.  
My little Mother, now, a miser sad,  
I hoard each smile which ministered my need,  
Each ready gift of you, your heart made glad,  
I gather now, to purge my lonely greed —  
And like a child 'mid newer friends astray,  
Ever I seek my friend of every day.

## THE DREAM-CHILD

**H**AVE you seen the Dream-child pass this  
way?

Hush, or you stir his quiet sleep!

Have you seen his little face to-day,

Drowsy with wonder still and deep?

Have you marked how radiant heaven left

Its trace expectant in his eyes?

Have you seen the Dream-child pass bereft?

Hush, or you stir his shadow-cries!

## THE HERITAGE

THOU tired Soul, far buried in the gloom  
Of all the alien selves I may but guess,  
How have I borne thy heritage, thy stress  
Of things remembered, thy immortal doom  
Cassandra-like, to peer where augurs loom  
Of deeds to come, dumb craven now, 'neath fears  
Of sights portentous stormed unto deaf ears?  
What wast thou ere within the shadowed room  
Of my bare dwelling thou didst find a place?  
Through what dim centuries of flight, and whence  
Camest thou, my days impermanent to trace?  
Where wilt thou roam when thou must flee from  
hence  
Once more into the wilderness alone —  
Poor Soul! unhoused, thy pride lies fallen, prone!

## MY LADY OF CLOUDS

CRADLED in mist, is my Lady of Clouds,  
She is veiled with a shadow of wandering sky,  
She is rocked by the winds from their Eden on  
high,

Oh, white as the Dawn, is my Lady of Clouds!

On thy shrine burn the stars,—my Lady of  
Clouds,

They illumine my dreams, that baffle the morn,  
And my soul that beheld thee, still watches for-  
lorn,

My soul now tempestuous,—Lady of Clouds!



## JOY RIDING SWIFTLY

JOY riding swiftly, looms at times too great  
This little earthen world-shell to include,  
Man only hearkens passive to the rude  
Untutored soul-cries, that, aroused too late,  
For sudden, very dumbness seal his fate.  
Joy riding swiftly, passeth by unknown  
The yearning, silent ones to hope outgrown,  
Who would the stranger hail, yet hesitate.  
Not so plods Grief, who walks with lagging gait,  
Until man learns to know her sober face,  
Prepares averted greeting as he waits,  
Foreseeing her sure advent in the place ;  
Like to some Adam, on whose wakened ears  
Falls the first mated sense of lethal fears.

ON A PORTRAIT OF ROSSETTI  
BY WATTS

ROSSETTI! In thy slumbrous eyes I peer,  
Seeking the twilight child still mazed in  
dreams

'Mid holy images and magic streams.

What lone pursuit is thine, remote and dear?

What brooding laughters, shadowy with fear,

Lurk in the chalice of thy lips so drawn?

What hours, whose Cadmean triumphs mourn

Youth's myrtle crowns, hold thee envisaged near?

Art thou still staring with thy prophet gaze

Upon that tablet wrought with hands elate,

Where leans a visioned Beatrice, 'mid a maze

Of haloed hair and brow predestinate?

How thy great soul must beat its cloistered wings

To pierce the poppied silence where she sings!

## THE LADY CLAIRE

THE Lady Claire hath sat her down,  
Beside her jester true,  
In all the country, knight nor clown  
Might her dear bidding do.

The Lady Claire hath sighed, I ween,  
Her jester hears, and laughs !  
And sowing secret tears between,  
Her jester pipes and quaffs.

Yet he who pipes and quaffs, well knows  
A jester's heart is true,  
Hath he not spared the wayside rose  
Sweet with anointed dew ?

A jester is a merry wight,  
A wayside rose is fair,  
Earth's leveller, the dream-willed night,  
Enchains the Lady Claire !

## THE IMAGE

WITH blinded eyes a sculptor wrought,  
Witless of conscious time or thought,  
Shaping with fingers, soul-impelled,  
The image that his dreams had held.

And lo, when suddenly the blight  
Was lifted from his curtained sight,  
With startled surety he faced  
The impulse that his skill had traced.

An apparition small and dim,  
Frail as a cloud of April whim,  
Revealing, manifest and true,  
The very creed a groundling knew.

The sculptor moulds, the poet dreams,  
The painter steeps his brush in gleams,  
The minstrel stirs his harp and sings,  
Each, wistful, lifts his moulted wings.

A world they shape, from self outcast,  
The Inner Image to the last,  
Yet wonder that their God must be  
Conceived to limits that they see.

## THE THREE FRIENDS

*"And three firm friends, more sure than day and night,  
Himself, his Maker, and the Angel Death."*

— S. T. COLERIDGE.

MAN has "three friends, more sure than day  
and night,  
Himself, his Maker, and the Angel Death."  
The first? What friend is this, a careless breath,  
A pledge of yesterday, this sorry wight  
"Himself!" A flickering candle-flame of light,  
This soul's own enemy, forever tossed  
'Mid cramped pursuance of the moment lost!  
The second, then, "his Maker"? From what height  
Gazeth He deedless, on man's bitter need?  
What brittle law such Arbiter appoints?  
The third? Nay, this . . . the Healer who anoints,  
The "Angel Death," who waits with sleepless eye,  
To garner man's dear dreams that tremble by?

## DIVERGENCE

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,  
the evidence of things not seen."*

SO writ is faith. She with her rainbow shrouds  
Trails the wide waters of intransient space,  
Pandora's beryl box she lids with clouds,  
'Neath wings of prayer glimmers her promised  
face.

Unwrit is life. She with unlettered hands  
Fingers her pence in calm exactitude,  
Viewing in mirrors, where at gaze she stands,  
Satan or God transfixed to memories nude.

## SPRING SEQUENCE





## I

### THE SPRING

LAST night I peered into the dark, but spied  
Naught save the winter's visage, and the rim  
Of steel about the tethered moon, that dim  
And cold, loomed 'mid its shadows, deified.  
To-day I wake, and hark! a robin's bride  
Rivets the breeze with one long, joyous note,  
A strain outpoured so swift, no ear can quote,  
No conscious heart can fathom! Far and wide,  
Proserpine, the home-enhungered, sows  
Green questionings to stir each bursting bough,  
The miracle of resurrection glows  
Within the sunshine-freighted air, where now  
Throbbing desire spreads a prism wing,  
And morning heaves with breaths of perfumed  
Spring.

## II

### STORM-CHASED

CLOSE to the ground, huddled on wing for  
fright,

The storm-chased leaves fly tottering through the  
air ;

The murmuring sweeps the barren tree-tops where  
Æolian tones, long dumb, now loosed in flight,  
Echo tempestuously from height to height.

Wild streams of melody the prisoned wind  
Plays on Pan's broken pipes, all vainly thinned  
With wintry gusts of seasons lapsed from sight,  
With tensioned cries, more human than their pain.

Close to my window through the burdened hours  
Riots unceasing the down-trodden rain,  
Wrecking in triumph Spring's first garnered  
bowers,

Blinding the face of day with darkness torn  
From out night's trustful fold to hopes forlorn.

### III

#### THE MELODY

THRICE echoed rings the pine tree's low-voiced call,

Through Spring's soft crevices of moss and green,  
Stirring the withered harvest, brown and lean  
Of last year's leaves, that shiver as they fall.

The trailing May-buds wake, and shake their pall  
Of winter free, and peer, wet-eyed, abroad,  
With timid promise of their fragrant hoard.

What is this melody, now great, now small,  
That strikes the wandering viols of the air,  
Like lullabies moon-maidens dare in sleep  
To cradled waters rocked beneath their care :

What pagan chant, Euterpe, this, to creep  
Into a mortal soul with fear and pain,  
With surging needs, as meaningless as vain ?

#### IV

### DAY SHUTS ITS TROUBLED EYES AND SLEEPS

THE gray day shuts its troubled eyes and  
sleeps,  
Stroked by the lingering fingers of a sun  
Hidden in mists, face muffled like a nun,  
Fading beneath the veil of cloud that sweeps  
The shadow-realm of night that vaguely creeps.  
Dumbly a widowed sparrow droops a wing  
Through paling heavens torn with windy Spring,  
Startling the gleaming haze where April peeps.  
Now in her sodden caves may Sorrow hold  
The solitary vigil day debars,  
Now from her rifted nest, Joy manifold  
May share her radiance with the early stars.  
While, careless of earth's mummer-soul that weeps  
Or smiles, day shuts its troubled eyes and sleeps.

## LOST SPRING

LOST Spring is in the air —  
We may not sing, —  
Its petals buried lie,  
And yet we cling  
Unto the lessening instant  
While we say  
“To-morrow,” and we house the frost  
To-day.

Lost Spring is far afield —  
Its birds have flown,  
We know their way was south,  
From us outgrown,  
And yet we hold one feather  
While we plead  
“To-morrow,” and the silence is  
Our need.

Lost Spring is near to-night —  
                                    We hear its lute  
Stilling the harvest winds  
                                    So long since mute,  
We tend our withered lilies  
                                    As we smile  
Once more “To-morrow,” . . . and we grow  
                                    The while.

# NIGHT VOICES AT SEA





# I

## THE GULLS

**I**TS cloud-smoothed plumes unfurled, the last  
white gull

Forswears the tolerant largess of the sea,  
And with prismatic pomp of heraldry,  
It dips its colors to the ship's proud hull.  
One moment poised, and 'midst the sharpened lull,  
The gracious feathers melt to sky and mist,  
While sudden distance quickens, day dismissed,  
That linked earth-tokens to the waters dull.  
Yet as the night, whose woman-heart is lone,  
Fearful of thoughts day-silenced from her door,  
Stirs in her windy sleep, it seems the moan  
Of twilight birds resumes the sundered shore,  
And on the spacious air the touch remote  
Of memoried wings reclaims the dreaming boat.

## II

### WIND-LEAVES

ONE other sound, at night, the ocean knows,  
As keen as star-songs, or the brush of wings,  
A furtive, lispingsound, whose murmur brings  
A fragrance with it, like the scent that blows  
Between cheek-petals of a brier rose.  
Oh, wondrous is the whisper, strangely strung  
As alien cedars sprung from Lebanon,  
As rustling grasses caught in sunset throes:  
For then the ocean, twinned with night at birth,  
Hears the great cry, like Echo in her caves,  
Wrung from the staple forests of the earth,  
That in majestic verdure walk the waves.  
Ah, well it knows that cry of waters wide,  
One with the wind-leaves and their branch-tossed  
tide.

## WINDS AT SEA

THROUGH the long leaves of darkness following,

They chase the solitary ship at sea,  
Horizon-thonged, their leashes hollowing  
The stemless waves that breast eternity.

Ever with piping sighs they circle round  
The stiffened cordage of the masts until  
Their woodland silences are huge with sound,  
And all their sudden, strident claims are still.

## EUROS

(The Southeast Wind)

O BRAVE, swift wind, self-centred and untamed,  
That stirs the patient air and will not rest,  
Wise with the burden of unfathomed quest,  
Breathless with haste of labors yet unblamed,  
What covert centuries have crept unnamed  
Since that my soul did race with thee, nor knew  
The gloom-winged harpy gaining as we flew?  
What dawns have trembled into noons that flamed  
With altar-fires from a Dryad shrine?  
What harmony yet lingers o'er thy lyre  
Whence Hermes, hidden in a leaf, did twine  
A laurel wreath for loves that never tire?  
Since thou didst touch my brow in that far sky,  
Is there no mortal goal will satisfy?

# RETURN TO ITALY



## I

THE sun hath sown a pathway in the sea,  
Where golden poppies bloom beneath the sky,  
And twilight fishers gather, drifting by,  
The shimmer-petals floating dreamily :  
What chance hath brought this fragrance unto me  
Of Italy's tense blossoms and her soil,  
Whose hands laborious make a singing toil,  
Fashioning her rocks to gardens tranquilly ?  
Now once again I see her olives stride  
Unto their tryst eternal with the moon,  
And still with silver witcheries they hide  
Their plighted beauty from the prying noon.  
Ah, Italy, again thy voice I hear,  
Through slow quiescence of a lotus-year.